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RECOLLECTIONS OF LINCOLN AND DOUGLAS IN HILLSBORO, ILLINOIS.

BY JOHN M. WHITEHEAD

In the Lincoln-Douglas campaign both men made speeches in Hillsboro. As I remember, Mr. Lincoln spoke first earlier in the summer. There was a circus in town that day and the committee having charge of the Lincoln meeting chartered the "big top" and Mr. Lincoln delivered his speech in the afternoon from one of the circus wagons. The reason for this was the rain. It poured during the speech and beat upon "the top" so heavily at times that it was difficult to make himself heard. I do not remember that he told many stories and created much merriment. I remember him standing in the wagon in the circus ring. I was a small boy and my father had taken me with him in the forenoon to the place, the old "Lyceum," where other citizens had congregated to meet Mr. Lincoln and so I had a very distinct impression of him which has remained with me all my life. Relatives and friends of our family came from the farms of the vicinity to attend the meeting and took dinner at our house. The occasion was one of unusual interest to the community. The fame of the great debater had spread abroad. My father used to tell of the first speech he heard Mr. Lincoln make in the old log court house at Hillsboro. A part of the building remains covered with clapboards and occupied as a dwelling. My father came into town from his farm and seeing a crowd around the court house he concluded to find out what was going on. A political meeting was being held and one of the well known men of the day was talking. At the conclusion of his speech a call for "Lincoln" came from the crowd. Presently a tall, awkward, homespun sort of a young man began to make his way to the front. He finally reached the desired position and proceeded to make a speech. The time was "away back yonder," perhaps in one of the exciting campaigns of the '40s. I do not recall anything that my father said about the speech except that he said "Lincoln caught the

crowd." All the circumstances were calculated ineffaceably to impress upon a child's memory the principal occurrences of the day. Up to the campaign of 1860 my father had been an ardent democrat but from that time on he had no patience with the democratic party.

There were a number of the old citizens of Hillsboro who were life long acquaintances of Mr. Lincoln. Joseph T. Eccles was a Kentuckian of the fine old type who had known Mr. Lincoln from his youth up and was one of his trusted advisers in that part of the country. I remember one cold Sunday morning at the Presbyterian church I went with my father to the Sunday school, which preceded the church service, and there were gathered around the stove Mr. Eccles and others who were interested in what he had to say about his visit to Washington from which he had returned. By the way, my father and Mr. Eccles were great chums. I remember my father asked Mr. Eccles if "Old Abe" knew him. Mr. Eccles had a very heavy voice and a prolonged chuckle when he laughed. He laughed and said, "Know me? I guess he did! He took care of me at the White House in the old fashioned way." Of course it wasn't my father's idea that Mr. Lincoln could have forgotten his old friend Eccles but he wanted to know if the old time cordiality continued. I do not recall the details of the conversation except that Mr. Eccles was extremely pleased with his visit to Washington and with the President. He repeated his visits to Washington during the administration and always came home full of interesting things to tell his Hillsboro acquaintances.

The judge of the Circuit Court in that circuit was E. Y. Rice, a Kentuckian of the old school, who had been long acquainted with Mr. Lincoln and associated with him in professional activities, though opposed in politics.

The village tavern stood two blocks from my father's home where all the lawyers of the circuit were wont to "put up" when they came to Hillsboro to the term of court. I remember distinctly many times seeing the members of the bar sitting out on the porch or in the street with their feet propped up against posts swapping stories and Lincoln was

often of that number. Among these lawyers were General John M. Palmer, U. F. Linder, Anthony Thornton and many others who obtained greater or less renown at the bar of Illinois.

By the way, Mr. Douglas when he spoke in Hillsboro, spoke briefly in the evening from the roof of the tavern porch and he could be distinctly heard at my father's home. He had a marvelous voice. His principal speech was made in the afternoon at the fair ground. When I was in Yale College in the early seventies I remember hearing Blind Tom impersonate Mr. Douglas. Not so many years had elapsed then and the memories of Douglas were then fresher with me than now. I could remember well his noble voice and was greatly interested in Blind Tom's imitation of it. The older citizens of that community were nearly all acquaintances of Mr. Lincoln, some were friends and others were very hostile, and so I heard a great amount of discussion of the President and his administration and of the conduct of the war among the people.

On the morning that the news came of Mr. Lincoln's death, I was going with my father and the rest of the family from our farm west of town in a farm wagon to Hillsboro to attend the funeral of a relative whose body was coming on the morning train from the southwest. One of our neighbors was on his way home wearing the blue swallow-tail coat with brass buttons, buff vest and silk hat of the style then worn by the old fashioned gentleman. He stopped us and told us the news of the President's death. His name was Mr. Cory. He had been a lifelong democrat and politically opposed to Lincoln, but his voice was thick and his whole frame shook with emotion. My father whipped up his horses and hurried on to town hoping against hope that later news would not bear out the earlier reports of the morning that the President was dead; but alas! the daily papers came in from St. Louis about the middle of the day and we had to know that the President's great earthly career was ended.

There was a meeting at the Presbyterian church the following Sunday evening to commemorate the life and public

services of Mr. Lincoln. The old-fashioned church was packed to the doors. There was some formality in the opening of the meeting but presently the opportunity was given to any to speak from where they sat in the congregation. No experience in my childhood stands out more distinctly in my memory than my recollection of that wonderful meeting. One after another of the old men arose, some with the tears streaming down their faces, and with trembling voices expressed their love and admiration for the dead president and more particularly for the man whom they had known so familiarly for so many years. I particularly remember the remarks of one Mr. Stickel, one of the guests of our home on the day when Mr. Lincoln spoke in the circus tent.

On the day of Mr. Lincoln's funeral in Springfield business was generally suspended in Hillsboro. Public services were held in one of the churches and the people came from far and near to show their respect for their great dead. It has always been a matter of deep regret to me that I was not required by my parents to accompany them to these memorial services. Some childish whim beset my mind and I did not care to go and was not required to go, and so all my life I have felt a sense of loss on this account.

There was very bitter partisanship in our part of the state. Many bitter things were said after Mr. Lincoln's death which resulted in the severances of lifelong friendships and business relations, but there is no part of the country with which I am familiar where the memory of Abraham Lincoln is today more tenderly cherished than in good old Montgomery County.

In 1872 I went to New England for my education. I was an object of special interest to many people there because I was able to talk about Mr. Lincoln. I remember once talking with Prof. Thomas A. Thatcher, professor of Latin in Yale, and the manner of my early life and acquaintances came up and among other things I made some reference to Mr. Lincoln. The professor at once began to tell me of Mr. Lincoln's visit to New Haven, of the speech he made in Old Music Hall, of the reception given to him by the citizens and of his own con-

versation with him. He spoke of Mr. Lincoln's friendly way and when he was introduced to him he said, "Thatcher? Do you happen to be a relative of Congressman Thatcher of Kansas who was in Congress when I was?" (referring to his early one-term experience in Congress). Professor Thatcher narrated a great many other things that passed between him and Mr. Lincoln and his admiration and love for the man were unbounded. This was typical of the estimation in which Mr. Lincoln was everywhere held in New England.

